



This message is being sent on behalf of USAG Stuttgart leadership, Col. Carl D. Bird, garrison commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony M. Bryant, garrison command sergeant major:

Independence Day honors the birthday of our nation and commemorates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. It's a day of picnics and patriotic parades, a night of concerts and fireworks, and a reason to fly the American flag.

Unfortunately, it's also when the uniformed services typically see a spike in preventable off-duty accidents.

Since October, the Army alone has lost 93 Soldiers through needless accidents. Seventy-seven (82 percent) of these were off-duty incidents, two-thirds of which involved privately owned vehicles.

As service members, we view ourselves as professionals, and professionals manage risk.

Even when planning something as innocuous as a long weekend off, ensure you identify and assess all risks, and take the necessary steps to eliminate or mitigate them.

I've said it over and over, but I have to say it again. Drinking and driving is a deadly combination. Even one drink can reduce your ability to concentrate and react to things that happen suddenly when you are driving. If you drink and get behind the wheel, you are putting your life and career at risk. Don't do it.

You also need to be aware of the dangers associated with recreational summer activities such as kayaking, canoeing, swimming and white water rafting. These activities can also turn disastrous when combined with alcohol.

Lastly, since the beginning of fiscal year 2011, the Army has experienced a significant increase in fatal motorcycle accidents.

If you are a motorcyclist, drive defensively and always wear proper protective gear.

But don't take it from us ... listen to a couple of our community members who race motorcycles. Go to the garrison's website at [www.stuttgart.army.mil](http://www.stuttgart.army.mil), click on the [Youtube link, then the "Disciples of Speed" video.](#)

Of course, if you are a motorist, keep your eyes open for motorcycle riders.

Enjoy this holiday and the summer without taking unnecessary and unacceptable risks. Use your risk management training for even the most routine activity or task; adopting a careless attitude can be lethal.

We wish you all a well deserved holiday weekend. Make it a safe one.

Col. Carl D. Bird